STODDARD TELLS OF THE HAWAIIAN ISLES

Author of South Sea Idyls Talks in San Jose.

The following article on Hawaii is from the San Jose (Cal.) Mercury, which is advertising prize trips to Honolulu:

O, Stoddard, in our hours of ease,
Despondent, dull and hard to please,
When coins and business wrack the brow
A most infernal nuisance thou.

O, Stoddard, if to man at all
To me unveil thy face—
At least to me—
Who at thy club and also in this place,
Unwearied have not ceased to call,
Stoddard, for thee!

I scatter curses by the row,
I cease from swearing never;
For men may come and men may go,
But Stoddard's out forever.

But Stoddard was not out all day yesterday. The author of the "South Sea Idyls" was in, in a sense, and he consented to talk to me of the Hawaiian Islands—of the bread-fruited suburbs of Papeete, appealing to the softer senses of the poet; of the voluptuous Tahitian, and of the responsive echoes in American hearts to the ducet beguilements of the South Sea siren.

And those facetious lines, quoted at the head of this article, were penned by poor health-broken Stevenson and one day long ago dropped under the door of Charles Warren Stoddard's room. For the downcast man (physically) was bubbling over with impromptus and he himself took them to the "most San Franciscoey part of San Francisco" and laid them there at the poet's door. But here—and the jump is self-evident—the result of these little quips and conferences was "The Wrecker," and the trip of Stevenson to the South Sea islands.

"I said to myself," Stoddard writes in his "Exits and Entrances," a prose epic, "apart from the inevitable animate attractions, the consummate splendor of vast palm plantations, the lisp of the reef-zoned, effeminate sea, the almost overwhelming fragrance of indolent gales, heavy with the perfume of citron and lime—these will surely paint his skies a richer color and inflame the blood of his heroes, if not that of his heroines."

But these are the written words of the author of "South Sea Idyls." They are commensurate, they are ample, they are sufficing in that they take you into an enchanted land where for generations hence voices as soft as the sibilant waters that flow by Vailima, and as sad as the sob of the sea, will chant in the radiant starlight the lofty exploits of Tusitala, the Teller of Tales, whose dust is gathered upon the crown of Vaea, where he had longed to lie. The pages of landscape and seascape, that are enough to wring the heart of a homesick lover of the South Seas, are all that is left to us of Stevenson, but that writer, in whom there is not the faintest suspicion of a Scotch mist hovering between him and reality, is still with us telling of the halcyon days when he nestled in the bosom of that tropical equatorial land and in poetic mosiacs, that to the discredit of readers are not universally known, he wrapped its glories.

Charles Warren Stoddard, than whom no living writer has done more to immortalize the languid southern land, sat yesterday in his living room; not a chamber that you would associate with a poet's existence, it was prosy but comfortable. Before him lay a large writing pad on a number of pages of which were scrawled in that hideous, inartistic scrawl of his, some copy. The room was spacious. On his little writing table nestled in an alcove between three windows were a few books, one of which was the Bible. What was there to attract the poet of the South Seas, that land of indolence and magic, to these comfortable but prosaic surroundings, or was it Paul Clitheroe again seeking refuge in a picturesque monastry, he who camped among cannibals, basked in the favor of Cardinal Princes, starved in Bohemia, or with the holy missionaries in far off places, feasted with Eastern potentates or disported with thespian stars or coryphees, all of which were alike to him, as far as the eternal fitness of things are concerned. Yes, Stoddard has told us there was a natural tendency to method in some mystical muttering music that made it easy for him to drop into a rut. And with him we were almost prone to say, "Perhaps after all he could get used to his new life and live it out."

What was there to attract, to console, to satiate the poet?

You look out in the afternoon and the symptom of approaching rain expressed in the schoolboy song of long ago is recalled "the distant hills are loking nigh" taking you within apparently stone's throw of the coast range, and up there to the east is Lick Observatory, though that does not appeal to the poet's uncommercial instincts. But, "it is lovely when the sun rises in the morning," he says. "The windows in the houses up there around Mt. Hamilton are illuminated as if by an arc light. I see them from this window. And at sunset sometimes you get little pictures of nature's handiwork that console you to look at."

It was easy to induce the author to talk on the Hawaiian islands.

THE AIR PERFECTLY GLORIOUS.

"If one of the teachers of this county," he said, "should want to go to the Hawaiian islands she should take one of the big ships for China that touch there. After or about the second days' trip you get into that beautiful air. You don't see much air, but there you never fail to feel it. It becomes perfectly glorious. You are about six days at sea. Perhaps they make it sometimes less than that and you get up to these islands which is like a bit of landscape gardening—something marvelous for color. It is a climate in which it rains whenever it feels like it, and nobody cares whether it rains or not, because the rain doesn't wet you down there. It simply sprinkles you. The air is full of rainbows. You see rainbows flitting around and sometimes when the sun shines the rain beats upon the roof, coming down diagonally from windward."

"There you have rainbows always on tap. And when you went ashore in the old days, the good, dear old days, you stepped into a kind of Garden of Eden, where there then existed all Adams and Eves, but now, of course, the people all wear clothes and sweat, and if you go ashore you will have a number of hotels to choose from, not only in Honolulu, but two or three miles up the coast."

And then Mr. Stoddard told of Waikiki, of the beaches, the glorious surf-bathing and surf-riding on canoes. "And there," he said, "you simply loaf around. It is no place to do anything except to see and breathe; the air is fragrant with all sorts of delicious perfumes, the lilies, the beautiful lilies, grow all round on the roadside with such tropical perfumes, and the roses, jasmines and Japanese lilies that are so intoxicating, abound, and you

> One visit to the Hawaiian Islands is enough in this sense. You become inoculated with the unquenchable desire to go there again. You cannot overcome that fever; you cannot get rid of it. You have to go back to that charm, that indescribable charm, again and again. These are the islands of tranquil delights, of coral strands, of beauty and of nature. See them once, you must see them more than once.—Statement by Charles Warren Stoddard to San Jose Mercury Representative.

CHARLES WARREN STODDARD.

listen to the birds, many of which have been, alas, too, imported.

NEVER CLOSED DOORS OR WINDOWS.

"The houses were scattered about. Now I suppose they have been huddled up together, shoulder to shoulder, and yet that is a country in which people ought to live apart, should be separate because the houses are never shut. At the bungalow, where I was living, we never throughout the year closed a window or door night or day."

Mr. Stoddard bemoaned the advent of modernizing influences. He was sorry that some of the beautiful lawns were divided up into building lots. "Even before my day," he said, "they had telephones and women sat at the phones and heard what each other had to say all day. It was the cheap amusement then, but they have found for them nowadays a more practical utility.

"There are trains running to the harbor. In my day you would go on horseback or in a carryall, and now you go by steam. Everything is being modernized, brought up to date. They have soldiers there. In my time they had soldiers, too, but if you looked at them they were as liable as not to start up a song, a chorus—'grand richesse.' But these dear old days I think are gone forever. Everything has become common-place. Everything is becoming vulgarized."

"The climate; is that, too, gone?"

"The climate remains, but every one is breathing it nowadays. They packed the place."

When you hear Mr. Stoddard's lament on the lost glories of Hawaii and then a little paeon of joy that all might not yet be lost, you think of the beautiful passage in Marion Crawford's "The Witch of the Prague," in which he asks if this is the age of reason, the age of law. The Greeks are gone, yet the Hermes of Olympia remains, mutilated and maimed, indeed, but faultless still and still supreme. Athens still stands in broken loveliness, and the Tiber still rolls its tawny waters heavily through Rome, but Rome and Athens are today but places of departed spirits. They are no longer the seats of life. Their broken hearts are petrified. All men may see the ports through which the blood flowed to the throbbing center, the traces of the mighty arteries through which it was driven to the ends of the earth. But the blood is dried up, the hearts are broken, and though in their stony ruins those dead world-hearts be grander and more enduring than any which in our time are whole and beating, yet neither their endurance nor their grandeur have saved them from man, the destroyer, nor was the beauty of their thoughts or the thoughtfully devised machinery of their civilization a shield against a few score thousand rough-hammered blades, wielded by rough-hewn mortals who recked neither of intellect nor of civilization, nor yet of beauty, being but very human men, full of terribly strong and human passions.

You see there is sorrow and joy here, the lament and the note of delight.

"The only way in which to see Hawaii as it used to be in the palmy days," Mr. Stoddard continued, "in the days of the kingdom, is to go out to Kauai, the most northern island, the one that is least populated. Down in the valleys there you will find some of the old school of natives and the old atmosphere is still there, because it has not been contaminated by these civilizing destroyers. There are steamers plying between the islands. It is the easiest thing in the world to stop off at one of them and go to the other."

THE PRINCESS AND THE LAVA.

Next Mr. Stoddard referred to the volcano, saying, "it is the only volcano you can distinctly see in action as it you were in an orchestra seat or scenic box. I have been to Hecla, Vesuvius and other volcanoes and they couldn't hold a candle to the thing they have down there. It is very active. Once in a while it threatens to destroy something. There is not very much to destroy, only a beautiful village, and the people can easily walk away from it. The lava is like molasses candy. You can play with it, especially if you have wooden soles to shoes. It freezes. When I was down there there was a great, gorgeous, big Princess, sister of the last of the Kamehameha. She was Princess Ruth, a perfectly enormous woman. The lava was flowing down from the crater, Halemaumau, which was in a great state of eruption, and creeping toward Hilo village. It is one of the loveliest little villages imaginable. The lava was moving slowly and slowly upon this village and likely to destroy it. The Protestant missionaries got together and decreed that it should stop. They sent word to the toll guard to stop it. Whether or not the message miscarried I do not know, but it came on and on and the natives were crazy, chiefly because they were going to lose their beautiful village, not because they would lose their houses and furniture, because they could remove the latter and build the former of grass and a frame in a few moments somewhere else. Finally this large Ruth, she weighed at least 400 pounds, said, 'I will go there and see to this,' and she took one of these inter-island boats and a whole retinue of her natives, and she took a number of suckling pigs, a lot of tobacco, and many gin bottles and she sailed straight for the port of Hilo. When she arrived the people were in a great state of excitement. The inhabitants were removing their furniture from their houses and were getting to the high places. She went ashore with her people and went right straight up in front of this grand river of lava that was creeping down as it melted, and she stood in front of it, and she threw up to it the pigs, saying, 'eat,' and she threw to it the gin, saying, 'drink,' and she threw it the tobacco, saying, 'be satisfied,' and then she thundered out the mandate 'Stop,' and by Jove it stopped. There were 1000 witnesses. This is a fact. And the village was saved.

"We used to do that kind of thing in the old days when I was there. It is 42 years since I first went to the Hawaiian islands. That was the time when if a man wore a shirt he was considered a dude. I went there in '64, again in '68, again in '71, and in '83, when I spent three years there. It took 11 days to go there in sailing vessels, or in the beautiful little packets or barks. I once took 33 days to go there in a schooner, and though everybody thought we were lost we got there."

Amongst the least known of Mr. Stoddard's works, a volume now out of print, is "Lazy Letters from Low Latitudes," dealing exclusively with the Hawaiian islands.

TEMPTED STEVENSON TO SOUTH SEAS.

In Robert Louis Stevenson's novel, "The Wrecker," is a chapter entitled, "On the City Front," meaning San Francisco. The hero of "The Wrecker" is supposed to be an artist who is wandering around the city seeking for the most picturesque portions to paint. He came to what he called the "most San Franciscoey part of San Francisco," and that was on the northwest corner of Harrison and Second. On the top of a cliff there was the remains of a house which had been once very handsome. It was in the Gothic style, built by Pedar Lather, a banker. The rear portion was of wood, the other portions of brick. Stoddard had his room in a portion of what was left of the building. In "The Wrecker" the artist is reported sitting on the top of that cliff, near the fine ruins of the old vine-covered house. The first day he came there to make his picture he saw some one looking out of the window. The next day, when he came to develop his picture further, that person bowed to him, and the third day he came down from his room and the artist and he became friends, as men of an artistic temperament are bound to do. The artist was invited to his rooms, and in the novel these rooms, full of curios from the South Seas, are depicted, and he tells that when he went away he did so with a copy of "Omoo," a novel by Herman Melville, under one arm and a book dealing with the South Seas in the other. The artist-hero in "The Wrecker" was none other than the author himself, "Robert Louis Stevenson, the book dealing with the South Seas, which he took away with him, was "The South Sea Idyls," the magnus opus of Mr. Stoddard and the author of "The Wrecker" tells us that it was this incident, this visit that caused him to go to the Hawaiian islands.